

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

Please replace the claims, including all prior versions, with the listing of claims below.

**Listing of Claims:**

1-8. (Canceled)

9. (Previously presented) A method for setting up and clearing a communications link, comprising:

producing control information in a central control device, which control information defines a link via a switching matrix for time slot links for PCM data paths;

controlling transport-network specific call processing, using the control information, in a transport network for transporting communications data via the communications link; and

setting up a communications link by using the call processing and at least one existing fixed connection element which is set up in the transport network.

10. (Previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 9, wherein the call processing is performed by decentralized switching devices in the transport network, and the communications link is set up via a permanent virtual connection between two decentralized switching devices.

11. (Previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 9, wherein the communications links are set up via at least one permanent virtual connection.

12. (Previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 9, wherein the communications link is set up via an ATM transport network.

13. (Currently amended) A system for setting up and clearing, a communications link, comprising:

a transport network to provide a communications link; and  
a control network to control the setting up and/or clearing of the communications link, the control network having a first device to control the setting up and/or clearing of connections in the transport network via the control network, the first device being arranged physically separately from the transport network, wherein

the transport network has at least two decentralized switching devices to provide a communications link in the transport network, with at least one permanent communications link via the transport network between the decentralized switching devices, and the decentralized switching devices are decentralized devices forming a telephony exchange.

14. (Previously presented) The arrangement as claimed in claim 13, in which the communications link is in the form of a permanent virtual connection.

15. (Previously presented) The arrangement as claimed in claim 13, in which the transport network is in the form of an ATM network.

16. (Previously presented) The arrangement as claimed in claim 13, in which there are communications links between the decentralized switching devices.

17. (Previously presented) The arrangement as claimed in claim 14, in which the transport network is in the form of an ATM network.

18. (Previously presented) The arrangement as claimed in claim 14, in which there are communications links between the decentralized switching devices.

19. (Previously presented) The arrangement as claimed in claim 15, in which there are communications links between the decentralized switching devices.